

Lost and Found in Beirut

Memory and Place in Narratives of the City

Nour Dados

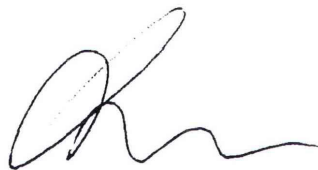
Doctor of Philosophy

2010

CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORSHIP/ORIGINALITY

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'R' followed by a series of connected loops and a horizontal line at the end.

Signature of Student

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been written without the help, generosity and support of so many people, to them my warmest thanks. To Devleena Ghosh at the University of Technology Sydney, my deepest gratitude for her counsel, support and immeasurable patience. She encouraged, nurtured and worried about the, at times haphazard, development of an idea into an argument, an argument into chapter and a chapter into a thesis. Stephen Muecke at the University of Technology Sydney and Paul Tabar and Samira Aghacy from the Lebanese American University provided me with indispensable advice and encouragement in the early formative stages. My thanks also to the support of the Centre for Arab and Middle East Studies at the American University of Beirut, and in Paris, the wonderful staff and residents of the College Franco-Britannique at the Cité Internationale Universitaire du Paris where I spent the greater part of six months in 2006.

This journey would have been far more difficult without all the amazing post-graduates, faculty, staff and students from Arts and Social Sciences at UTS whom I have been fortunate enough to have shared a workspace, a class, a conversation and a cup of coffee (and other beverages!) with over the years. Thank you to all of you! An especially big thanks to Andrew Jakubowicz and Mara Moustafine, Heather Goodall, Heidi Norman, Katrina Schunke and the marvelous Juleigh Slater from the Faculty Research Office for all their support and encouragement during my time at UTS. A very special thank you to Suyin Hor – it wouldn't have been half the fun it was without you! Thank you for being there, even at the most difficult times. Thank you to Wafa Chafic, for her generous friendship and immeasurable support. My thanks to the wonderful Pauline O'Loughlin, Paul Ashton and Lisa Andersen at UTS Shopfront where I worked in the final exhausting stages of the thesis! A huge thank you to Claire Pettigrew, my Shopfront comrade, for lending a sympathetic ear to my exhausted ramblings and to Amanda Wise from the Centre for Research on Social Inclusion at Macquarie University who was so wonderfully supportive as I juggled work and thesis deadlines. My deepest thanks to Kay Donovan for providing many a needed occasion for respite and Tony Mitchell for hosting the first Beirut 'gig' in a lecture theatre full of captive undergraduate students. Thank you to Katie Hepworth, Ben Ho and Jessie Lymn for the conversations and productive exchanges of ideas, theories and books without which even the most enthusiastic commitment to a project is difficult to sustain (and Jessie – for a friendly face and a place to stay in more than one foreign country!)

Very special thanks to Fei-Shi Chen and Jian Wu for their generous support at some of the most difficult times. Daniel Sanches de Lima – gracias por ser un hermano super! Thank you to Nazif Alic for sharing his home and his time when I was in Paris and for reading drafts and discussing ideas. Thank you to Bilal Khbeiz for the very helpful conversations we have had over the last few years. Elisa Impara, thank you for being a wonderful friend and a luminous source of inspiration. A very big thanks to Shaun Wilson, friend and comrade-in-arms! My grandparents, Wehbe 'Abu Ziad' and Zahia 'Umm Ziad' took a special interest in this project and were a constant source of strength and inspiration. Thank you to my wonderful aunt Joanne, the master of the 'balancing act', for passing on her invaluable skills. My mother Katia, and my sisters, Julie and Dani, have lived through all the trials and tribulations of this thesis and to them I am eternally indebted. Special thanks to my mother for her unfaltering assistance in decoding obscure, or just generally difficult, Arabic and French phrases, and to Julie for her endless encouragement and support. Dani read multiple drafts of this thesis, and of chapters that once were and no longer are. She has been an invaluable companion and to her my greatest appreciation. Thank you to the Al-momani family in Australia and Jordan. A very special thanks to Kais Al-momani, who was an immeasurable source of strength, generosity and friendship, particularly in the final, difficult stages of producing the documentation of so many years of research. To all of you, my deepest gratitude.

The financial and emotional burden of taking on this task was made so much easier by the support that I received over four years through an Australian Postgraduate Scholarship from the University Graduate School at UTS. In the early stages of this research, I also benefited greatly from being able to undertake a number of research trips to Lebanon, France and the UK. My thanks to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at UTS and the Vice-Chancellor's Conference Fund for the support that made those experiences possible.

I have been fortunate to have had the opportunity to present some parts of this thesis at conferences during my time as a PhD student and to have benefited from those occasions to publish some of this work in independent articles and book chapters. Sections of Chapter 3 have been published in *Moment to Monument* (Transcript, Bielefeld 2009) in an essay titled 'Revisiting Martyrs' Square...Again: Absence and Presence in Cultural Memory'. Earlier versions of sections of Chapter 4 were published in the *International Journal of the Humanities* (3(8), 2006) in an essay titled 'Balconies onto Beirut: Spatiality in the Travelling City'. Sections of Chapter 6 have been published in two separate articles: 'Anything Goes, Nothing Sticks: Radical Stillness and Archival Impulse' in *M/C Journal* (12(1), 2009) and, 'A Distant Face: Inside Beirut's Postcard City' in the *International Journal of the Humanities* (6(6), 2008). My thanks to the conference organisers, reviewers, editors and publishers whose assistance has been thoughtful and generous. My deepest thanks to my thesis examiners for their invaluable encouragement, comments and suggestions.

My father, who spent all his life in Beirut, even his years in Australia, did not live to see the completion of this project. To him, I dedicate this work.

Dedication

In memory of my father, Metri

To my mother, Katia

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vi
List of Illustrations	ix
Abstract	xi
Note on Translation:.....	xii
Note on Transliteration:.....	xii
Introduction <i>Everything has arrived, and now the place</i>	1
<i>Outside the City of Seven Gates.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Inside the Gate of Seven Cities</i>	<i>13</i>
<i>The Atmosphere of Stars</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Cities of Invisibility.....</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>Folding Distance</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Displacing Place.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>How to Proceed Towards a Map of Place</i>	<i>31</i>
1 1820-1822 Debbagha Gate: From the City to the Port (place).....	37
<i>Gates and Walls.....</i>	<i>37</i>
<i>Maps and Stories</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>Topological Cartographies.....</i>	<i>54</i>
<i>Beirut Charted</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>Topologies of the Novel</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Towards a Map of Place.....</i>	<i>74</i>
2 1907 Serail Gate: Direction du Chemin de Fer (narrative).....	80
<i>Architecture and Memory.....</i>	<i>80</i>
<i>Dismantling the Gates</i>	<i>82</i>
<i>'Chemin de Fer'</i>	<i>88</i>
<i>Narratives of the City.....</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>Rebirthing Pains</i>	<i>98</i>

<i>Incursions into City Memory</i>	102
<i>An Ancient Future</i>	108
<i>From Second Empire to Second Republic</i>	113
<i>Hauntings</i>	117
3 1831 Derakah Gate: The Square beneath the Centre (memory)	126
<i>Mediterranean Port-cities</i>	133
<i>Beirut Cosmopolitan</i>	136
<i>Beirut's Phantoms</i>	142
<i>Revisiting Martyrs' Square</i>	149
<i>Making Memory</i>	152
<i>Postcards as Monuments</i>	157
<i>The Culture of Martyrdom</i>	162
4 1299/1936/1975 Silsilah/Santiyeh/Samtiyeh: Gates and Towers (aspect)	167
<i>Oblique View I: South Lebanon/Southern Spain</i>	167
<i>Balconies onto Beirut</i>	171
<i>Oblique View II: Beirut, Valentine's Day 2005</i>	175
<i>Aspect and the Collusion of Narrative and Architecture</i>	177
<i>Watching the City from Above</i>	189
<i>Panorama and Surveillance</i>	193
<i>Oblique View III: A Balcony of Spaces</i>	197
<i>Poetics and Space</i>	201
<i>Oblique View IV: Cities with/out Lights</i>	205
5 2006 Bab Yacoub: Heading South (distance)	210
<i>Lebanon, Lebanon</i>	210
<i>Southern Gates</i>	215
<i>The Anxieties of Distance</i>	219
<i>Tactile Technologies</i>	222
<i>Touch at a Distance</i>	226
<i>Blogging the War</i>	229
<i>Tactical Media</i>	233
<i>Rearticulations of Distance</i>	237
6 1860 Bab Idriss: Towards the Port of Beirut (knowledge)	242
<i>Epistemologies of Distance</i>	242
<i>Spectres</i>	245
<i>Knowledge and Dissolution</i>	246
<i>Excavating the Archive</i>	247

<i>Archiving the Levant</i>	257
<i>Postcard Memories</i>	259
7 Postcards from Beirut Australia, or Writing in the Tactilities of Distance	275
<i>I The Sailor's Life</i>	275
<i>II Writing Distance</i>	276
<i>III Travelling Elsewheres</i>	277
<i>IV A Picture of Friday</i>	278
<i>V In Sepia</i>	278
<i>VI Writing in Waves</i>	280
<i>VII A Heady Distance</i>	281
<i>VIII Night Journey</i>	283
<i>IX Postcard on a Postcard</i>	286
<i>X Walnuts</i>	286
<i>XI Voyaging smoothly inside the coincidence</i>	288
<i>XII Stuck on the Horizon</i>	290
<i>XIII Mapping Photographs</i>	291
<i>XIV "SCENE II – The Sea-coast"</i>	294
<i>XV Living in a Surface</i>	294
<i>XVI The Pleasure of Balconies</i>	295
<i>XVII Panorama</i>	296
<i>XVIII The Impossibility of Seeing the Sea</i>	297
<i>XIX Cities</i>	297
<i>XX Beirut</i>	299
<i>XXI: SY 'Argonaut'</i>	299
<i>XXII Death by Drowning</i>	300
<i>XXIII Status Unavailable</i>	301
<i>XXIV Postscript</i>	302
Conclusion Abu Nasr: The gate that wasn't a gate.....	305
Bibliography.....	315

List of Illustrations

Figure 1 Picture Postcard of Beirut c.1850.....	xiv
Figure 2 Map showing Beirut's old gates c.1835.....	xv
Figure 3 Montfort, <i>The Outskirts of Beirut</i> , 1837.....	6
Figure 4 Algiers (left) and Jardin Marengo (right) 1857.....	8
Figure 5 Postcard of the Achrafieh Hill c.1900.....	12
Figure 6 Sterne, <i>The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy</i>	21
Figure 7 Street Architecture before 1915, Beirut.....	36
Figure 8 Around Debbagha Gate.....	38
Figure 9 Loytved Map 1876.....	41
Figure 10 Mathew Paris <i>Map of the Holy Land</i> 1232.....	45
Figure 11 The Tunisian City of Al-Mahdia.....	46
Figure 12 Idrisi, <i>Tabula Rogeriana</i>	47
Figure 13 Idrisi, Map of Sicily.....	47
Figure 14 Circular World Map.....	49
Figure 15 Circular World Map (English),.....	49
Figure 16 Nasuh, 'The Galata section of Istanbul with the Bosphorous and Golden Horn'.....	50
Figure 17 Nasuh, 'The Amik Lake in the Plain of Antakya and the Orontes River'.....	51
Figure 18 Nasuh, 'The western half of Baghdad on the right bank of the Tigris'.....	51
Figure 19 The Piri Reis Map of 1513.....	53
Figure 20 Reis, City View of Istanbul c.1513.....	54
Figure 21 Lett's Birds Eye View of the Approaches to India.....	55
Figure 22 Ormsby, 'Beirut, the Ancient Berytus' 1831.....	59
Figure 23 Wyld, 'Plan of the town and harbour of Beirout, ancient Berytus' 1840.....	60
Figure 24 Awqaf List of Land Ownership in Beirut until 1843.....	63
Figure 25 Guer, 'Moeurs et usages des Turcs' (Istanbul) Paris, 1746.....	64
Figure 26 Panorama of Beirut in 1835, drawn after W.H. Bartlett.....	64
Figure 27 Melling's Bosphorous, Istanbul c.1800.....	68
Figure 28 Street Architecture before 1915, Beirut.....	79
Figure 29 Construction of a Clock Tower in Beirut, 1898.....	83
Figure 30 The Ottoman Garden (on the site of today's Martyrs' Square).....	84
Figure 31 Railroads in the Ottoman Arab provinces.....	89
Figure 32 The Inauguration of the Beirut Railroad Station, 1895.....	91
Figure 33 The Station at the Port, Beirut c1900.....	91
Figure 34 Beirut Tram c1910.....	93
Figure 35 The French-style Etoile Square and surrounding streets.....	99
Figure 36 Gavin and Maluf <i>Beirut Reborn</i> 1996, front cover.....	103
Figure 37 Timeline showing 'city memory'.....	104
Figure 38 Roman Baths, Beirut 2003.....	106
Figure 39 Beirut's Memory Exhibition, Beirut 2003.....	123
Figure 40 Beirut's Memory Exhibition, Beirut 2003.....	123
Figure 41 Street Architecture before 1915, Beirut.....	125
Figure 42 The remains of Derakah Gate, Beirut 1920.....	129
Figure 43 Montfort, 'Bab Derakah, View from the North-East', 1837.....	129
Figure 44 Martyrs' Square 1940s, Beirut.....	131
Figure 45 Martyrs' Square during the civil war.....	132
Figure 46 Protest at Martyrs' Square, 14 March 2005.....	133
Figure 47 Beirut City Map with Old Martyrs' Square Reference.....	137
Figure 48 Illustrated Poem for Beirut.....	143

Figure 49 Martyrs' Square after the civil war	149
Figure 50 Martyrs' Square after parts of the reconstruction were completed	150
Figure 51 Postcard of 'Place des Canons' (Martyrs Square), 1925	154
Figure 52 Cover of <i>Al-Arab Al-'Uthama (The Great Arabs)</i> , 1919.....	155
Figure 53 Protest at Martyrs' Square in the 1960s	157
Figure 54 Postcard showing Martyrs' Square, Beirut c1970.....	158
Figure 55 Postcard showing the statue at Martyrs' Square c1970.....	158
Figure 56 Martyrs' Square After the War, Beirut 1992	159
Figure 57 Hadjithomas and Joreige <i>Postcards of War</i>	161
Figure 58 Hadjithomas and Joreige <i>Postcards of War</i>	161
Figure 59 Martyrs' Square 18 February 2005	164
Figure 60 Street Architecture before 1915, Beirut.....	166
Figure 61 <i>Parque Federico Garcia Lorca</i> at Viznar	168
Figure 62 A typical 'maisons à trois baies'	174
Figure 63 Abdel Aziz Street, <i>House on Mars</i> giftshop in the corner.....	178
Figure 64 Wrapping paper detail, Beirut 2005	178
Figure 65 Joseph Jastrow 'The Duck-Rabbit'	181
Figure 66 Nahas <i>Beyrouth Mon Amour</i> Exhibition Mural,.....	184
Figure 67 Nahas <i>Beyrouth Mon Amour</i> Exhibition Detail,.....	184
Figure 68 National Museum of Lebanon, Beirut 2003	186
Figure 69 Racing in Beirut's Pine Forest, 1925	188
Figure 70 George Azar 'Children carrying coffin to the "Snubra" Cemetery'	189
Figure 71 Damaged Buildings, Beirut 1999	197
Figure 72 Municipality of Beirut Building with War Damage.....	199
Figure 73 Municipality of Beirut Building after restoration.....	199
Figure 74 Balcony Living, Beirut 2003	201
Figure 75 Street Architecture before 1915, Beirut.....	209
Figure 76 Yacoub and Lasserre 'Street near the Port of Beirut'	212
Figure 77 Yacoub and Lasserre 'Elegaic Landscape'	213
Figure 78 Yacoub and Lasserre, 'Elegaic Landscape'	214
Figure 79 Yacoub and Lasserre, 'Elegaic Landscape'	214
Figure 80 Postcard from the port, Beirut	241
Figure 81 'Beirut - Ancient Street Architecture - Demolished 1915'	262
Figure 82 'Beyrouth - La Poste Francaise'	263
Figure 83 Illustrated Beirut Postcard with inscription	266
Figure 84 Michel Echochard, Redevelopment plan for the Serail Hill, 1943	267
Figure 85 The radial Etoile Square with Clock Tower	268
Figure 86 Postcard titled 'Il Nuovo Lido', Genoa Italy	269
Figure 87 Postcard of Corniche Al-Rawsha, Beirut	270
Figure 88 'Une Execution Capital'	273
Figure 89 Postcard of the SY Argonaut, Beirut 1902.....	274
Figure 90 Street Architecture before 1915, Beirut.....	304
Figure 91 Street Architecture before 1915, Beirut.....	314

Abstract

Beirut is a city, a memory of a place, a place in memory, stories told and untold. Beirut is a slippery idea, a concrete reality, a liability, an abstraction. This project begins by asking what Beirut might be other than the name of a populous city on the eastern Mediterranean and how, by what means, in what shape, it has arrived in Sydney and in other cities in the world. It is not the sociological or demographic dimensions of these questions that matter most, but the possibility that asking these questions might enable certain as yet undefined processes to unravel, allowing Beirut to invent its own concepts and tell us something about the life of the city and the memory of place.

The project is not only about being lost and found in Beirut, it is also about losing and finding Beirut's trajectories on global maps of knowledge. In the aftermath of Edward Said's landmark *Orientalism*, it is time to mark the space between Beirut as an object of knowledge and an Orientalist construction, and Beirut as a city and a lived space. It is necessary to approach the city from a perspective that does not enclose it in a discursive formation that would be at once a historical past and a spatial void. The question of writing about the city and of inhabiting the everyday spaces of the city is no doubt inextricably entwined with the question of knowing the city and of constructing knowledge about the city. The project takes this doubling as a cue by unfolding from the space between these two ways of knowing and writing. In writing the city, Beirut emerges as a knowing subject and as an imaginary that is embedded spatially and historically in knowledge itself.

The project is constructed as a series of seven 'plateaus' in reference to Beirut's seven ancient gates. The term 'plateau' is borrowed from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. A plateau is at once an area of intensity and a formation that is loosely connected to other intensities. In forming these intensities, each chapter explores a particular theoretical concept in relation to Beirut's cultural, historical, spatial and political dimensions. The seven central concepts examined by the thesis are narrative, distance, aspect, tactility, memory, knowledge and place. Beirut is at once the subject of the work and the method through which these concepts in cultural theory are opened up and examined. The plateau structure unravels a contingent landscape in which it is possible to see Beirut without allowing the work – the text itself, to become an image that could replace Beirut. The text follows Beirut's trajectory on the maps of knowledge, or rather takes Beirut as a guide. We could say that the result is a journey and not a map since the journey is a spatio-temporal contingency and not a fixed object that could ever fill in for the city or replace it. Yet, there are multiple ways of mapping a journey, and this text is one such experiment.

Note on Translation:

I have made use of published translations of Arabic, French and Spanish texts where they have been available in English. In all these cases, this is acknowledged by a reference to the published translation and the translator. In some instances, if I have made amendments to the published translation, I have indicated this in the footnotes. Where a published translation has not been available, I have translated the text myself and marked it as such.

Note on Transliteration:

I have retained standard usage without the use of orthographical marks for most words that have been transliterated from Arabic. This includes using established Latinised spellings of Arabic for common words and names (eg. Elias, hammam) but also transliterating less common words, names and titles, which are often transliterated using a specialised orthographic system, phonetically. This has been done to allow ease of access given that this work does not presume familiarity with the specialised transliteration guidelines established by the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft Umschrift.

We call a “plateau” any multiplicity connected to other multiplicities by superficial underground stems in such a way as to form or extend a rhizome. We are writing this book as a rhizome. It is composed of plateaus. We have given it a circular form, but only for laughs.

Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus

We are wandering in search of ourselves, of our inscription here and now.

Hadjithomas and Joreige ‘Like oases in the desert’

A continuous labyrinth is not a line dissolving into independent points, as flowing sand might dissolve into grains, but resembles a sheet of paper divided into infinite folds or separated into bending movements, each one determined by the consistent or conspiring surrounding.

Deleuze, The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque

What the map cuts up, the story cuts across.

Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life

Whatever comes it will be old

So take with you anything other than this madness – get ready

To stay a stranger...

Adonis ‘The Desert’ (Selections from the journal of the Beirut Siege, 1982)

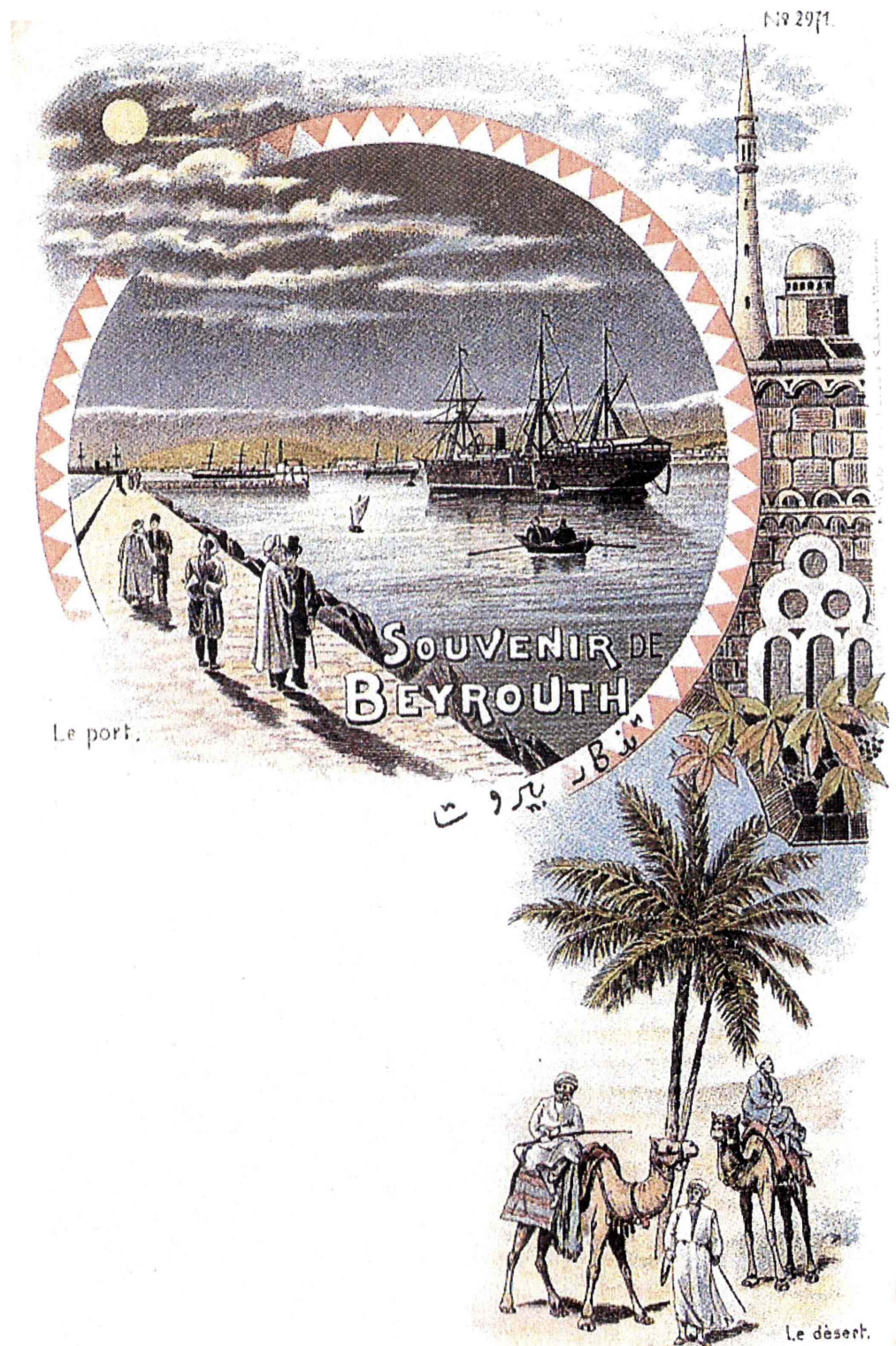


Figure 1 Picture Postcard of Beirut c.1850
Source: Debbas 1986, p.8

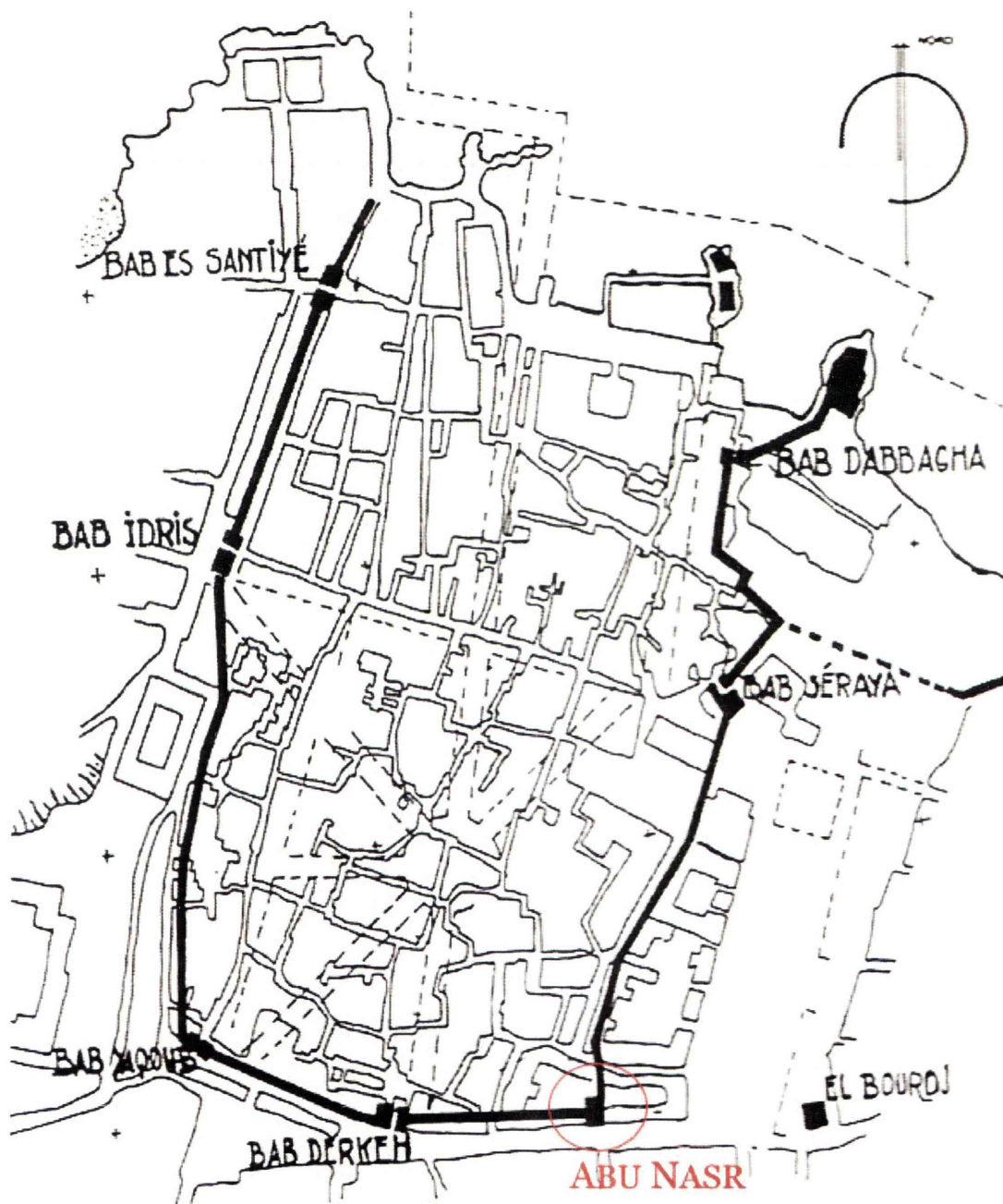


Figure 2 Map showing Beirut's old gates c.1835
 (Abu Nasr added by the author)
 Source: Tueni 2003, p.14